

Subject: Work Session Item #3 - American Sign Language (ASL)

American Sign Language State Board of Education Policy

American Sign Language (ASL) is a visual/spatial language with its own specific syntax and grammar. ASL is used as the primary mode of communication for many people who are Deaf or hard of hearing and is part of a rich and distinctive Deaf culture that has its own history, arts, and customs just as other world languages. Therefore, the Nebraska State Board of Education supports the recognition of ASL as a world language.

There are many benefits to offering American Sign Language as a world language. Students develop both expressive and receptive competency, allowing them to better communicate with others who use ASL. Increased exposure to ASL encourages integration of the deaf and hearing communities and stimulates interest in careers involving deafness, specifically sign language interpreting and deaf education.

The State Board of Education will take steps to ensure that local school district understand that ASL is an accepted world language in Nebraska. It will be recognized as meeting the requirements for Rule 10 and the Essential Education Policy document. This document, *Providing Equitable Opportunities for an Essential Education for All Students in Nebraska Public Schools*, encourages local school districts to offer introductory experiences in world languages in elementary schools. The Board also encourages districts to offer more formalized instruction in middle and high schools. The Board's recognition of American Sign Language as a world language will provide schools to offer instruction in ASL for world language credit. Students may be able to fulfill language requirements for admission to post secondary institutions through ASL courses.

The Board further supports the establishment of criteria in Rule 24 to recognize ASL as part of the endorsement that is recognized for teaching world languages. It also encourages collaboration with post secondary institutions to develop or enhance programs to offer the necessary coursework.